PEOPLE AGAINST RACISM

(Ľudia proti rasizmu)

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Since 1997 on a voluntary basis, and since 2000 as a professional initiative, People Against Racism **monitors racist expressions** in Slovakia, **immediately reacts on racists activities and racial attacks** of Neo-Nazis, **openly identifies this social pathology**. It **fights against intolerance** by social activities aimed at the creation of a multi-cultural society, safe for each citizen.

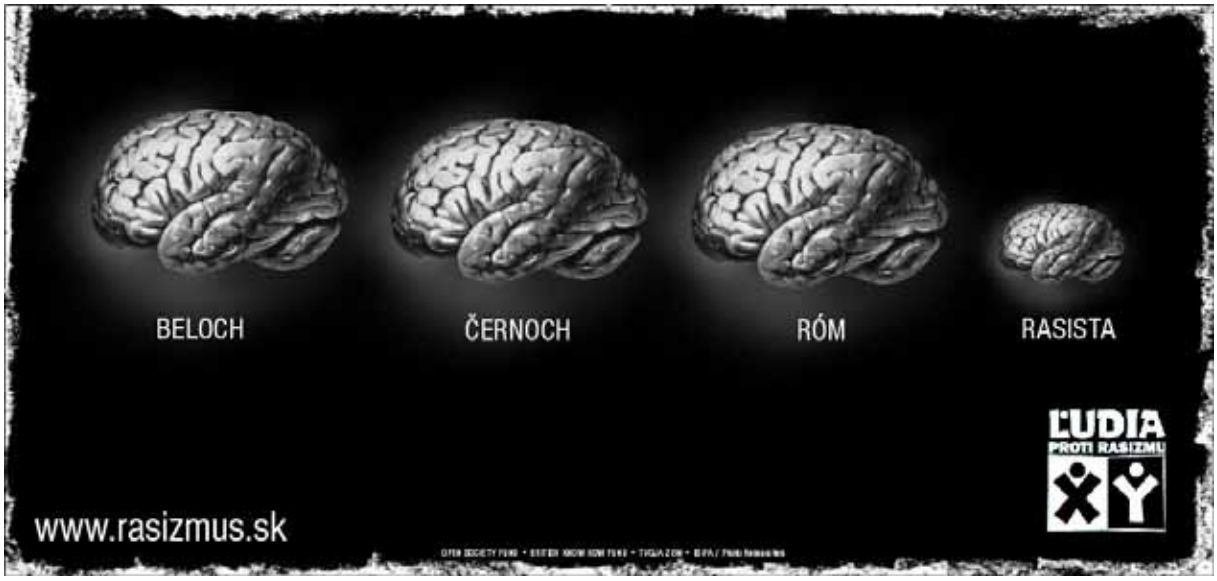
Our targets are: - "**hard racism**" - racist attacks, neo-Nazi groups etc.
- "**Soft racism**" - racist tendencies in the whole society, discrimination based on race/ethnic origin.

- There are approximately **3000 right-wing extremists /neo-Nazi supporters in Slovakia** carrying out racially motivated attacks and spreading hate propaganda.

- *The soft racism is especially strong in Slovakia*. According to public survey conducted in January 2002 nearly 80% of Slovak citizens wouldn't like to have a Roma as a neighbour and 59% refuse coloured neighbours.

- During the 5-year work of the Initiative, **our relevance and importance of our activities** has been confirmed :
  - **broad public** can address the Initiative with **information requests**
  - **teachers** can ask for **education tools and info-materials**
  - **wide network of voluntary activists** and people willing to work in the regions has been **created**
  - the initiative takes active part in **building multi-culturality**
  - the initiative co-operates with several non-governmental organisations
  - **gathers many experts** in various fields of social science, activists, and volunteers
  - the initiative is active in the **monitoring of neo-Nazis, prosecution of their activities,**
  - **communicates with the media,** journalists and makes endeavours to promote a wide-public discussion on multi-culturality,
  - **informs** the broad public on **cases of racism**
  - **the initiative offers legal counselling** and help to the victims of racially motivated attacks
  - it is a **supplement** and at the same time an **opponent of state authorities,**
  - **cooperates with police** and plays important role in change of police approach towards racially motivated and extremist crimes with promising results
  - **issues a bi-weekly newsletter Tolerancia (Tolerance)** and many information materials with specific topics such as "Myths on Roma ", "Myths on racism", "Who are Skinheads", "Law and racism" etc.
  - **gathers more than 5000 individuals –** activists, collaborators; hundreds of schools and tens of other institutions react to its appeals.
  - **cooperates with several international partners** (UNITED, FARE, EUMC, etc.)

People Against Racism (PAR) started its activities as a citizens´ initiative (not as a legal entity) in 1997 and its first public activities began in Autumn 2000.
For the first time, the issue of racism has been opened in Slovakia, for the first time there had been public campaigns, TV spots and advertisements targeting racism in the Slovak society.



Through several national **media campaigns,** PAR opened the topic of multi-culturality, and racial prejudices. These **campaigns were noticed by 80 % of citizens.** More than **63 % of them are convinced** that such campaigns are **necessary.** The PAR has spent minimal financial resources in the campaigns, thanks to successful media fundraising. PAR got **free media space** in TV and in other mass media in the total value of **SKK 12 million (300 000 Euro).**

The Creo Young and Rubican agency provided free creative services. The campaign organised by the Initiative gathered together all the three sectors. The Government's Office (state sector), the Creo Young and Rubican agency (private sector) and the People Against Racism (third sector) participated at the campaign.

In spite of the initial aversion, thanks to the PAR activities the **word racism has become a regular term to denote social pathology Slovakia has to deal with.** There is a public demand to continue with these activities, however, it is not possible to obtain financial resources just by selling T-shirts, pens or pins (the maximum income is SKK 50.000).

People Against Racism achieved confidence and reputation of a reliable partner by active, systemic work whose outcomes can be measured not only by the number of activists and volunteers (5 thousand at present) but also by increased activities of state authorities, self-governments, ministries, and individual citizens who influence the atmosphere in society as well – teachers, social workers, journalists etc.

The Initiative achieved its objective set in the first project – building up of Documentation **and Communication Centre Against Racism**. It created a high-quality, effective team of six persons who work in the centre at a high professional level and co-operate with many volunteers and external experts. This team communicates every day via Internet conferences with many activists all over Slovakia.

Young people, for whom tolerance and racism is a very sensitive theme, are one most important target groups of our activities, but they are also actively involved on a local, grass-root level. Every year we sent thousands of info packs to local activists, schools and offices, we organise public events – concerts, happenings and demonstrations. Young people are engaged in various ways into our struggle for more open and tolerant society.

This picture is from last years´ ***Antifascist happening*** *– open air festival held close to Bratislava city centre, with message of fight against fascism and racism, which was attended by 3000 young people.*

Co-operation with the **Ministry of Interior** is developed in several fields. We are members of the **Commission for Solving Racial Violence,** established by Order of the Interior Minister in year 2002. One of the outcomes of this commission's work – in co-operation with the Open Society Fund – was publishing and distribution of a **card with the symbols of extremist movements** among all members of the police, and elaboration of a **Methodical Guide for Specialists,** aimed at the fight against extremism.

In many criminal cases, PAR workers act as witnesses or initiate investigation of such cases. They represent the victims, insist on thorough investigation of cases when the police refuse to adopt or investigate them.
By such activities, the Initiative **raises legal awareness of the citizens and of the Police Force Members.**
PAR **actively co-operate with the General Attorney's Office** in solving individual cases and also in the framework of a systemic solution of racially motivated crimes.

The Initiative offered practical help to the victims of racial violence in more than 30 cases, in form of both legal help and media presentation.

Info line against racism 02-16356 *started to operate successfully. Citizens can consult and report crimes on a non-stop basis also in cases when they do not have confidence in repressive authorities. Cases of frequent violent attacks with racial motives, complaints about the police work and information on the planned or current activities of Neo-Nazis in Slovakia are reported regularly on the info line. PAR forwards such information to the respective authorities.*

Another, very important part of the People Against Racism work is **co-operation with the media.** PAR systematically co-operates with about **200 journalists** whom it „educates" on the topic of racism via regular updated information and press releases.

We have sent more than 60 press releases throughout the year. Such news are regularly reported in the most popular media, such as the Rádiožurnál of the Twist Radio, SME daily, TA3 TV, Markíza, Slovak Television etc. We organised 6 press conferences on the current topic and cases, each of them was visited by 20 approximately journalists.

Besides Internet conferences, the Initiative communicates with people also by distributing campaign materials and information packs. More than 5 thousand people are involved in such communication. Due to the lack of finances, we are not able to satisfy the increasing demand for PAR T-shirts, labels and posters that carry the message of antiracism.

These are some of our campaign materials we regularly sent out to our activists during the European action week against racism, but also throughout the year according to demand.

In the year 2003 PAR became a National Focal Point in the **RAXEN** network of the **European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.** This status enables us to strengthen our position in regard to state authorities and also ensures continuation of our activities and financial sustainability.